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Colossians Transcriptions
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Prayer Without Ceasing pt. 2

Last week we talked about prayer a little, and didn't get much into the actual verses here in Colossians 1:9-12. I have these verses typed out from a literal translation that I like... I don't always like this translation, but in this case I do. I'm just going to read these three verses, starting in verse 9:

***Col 1: 9-12** Therefore, we also since the day which we heard, do not cease praying for you and requesting that you may be filled full with the realization of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord for all pleasing. Bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the realization of God, being endued with all power according to the might of His glory, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who makes you competent for a part of the allotment of the saints in light.*

I especially like the way that it talks about the *realization* of God, "being filled up with the full realization of Him in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." I just like the way that reads because I think that sometimes when people think about the knowledge of God, they think of it as a very academic thing, or a very intellectual thing. "Realization" is a little better because it feels like that. It's like a light going on and getting brighter, and you realize what's already there, what's always been there. Then you can live and walk in that realization.

So I'm going to get to some of these verses today, but first I'd like to say a couple more things about prayer in general. Last week I started trying to describe something that may sound really obvious: I believe prayer is a very spiritual thing. I don't mean that the way it might sound. I mean that it's not natural at all. **I mean I think the true prayer of faith, or prayer in the name of Christ, is not done in the will of man, it's not done by the power or energy or believing of man, or in the name of man, rather it's done in the will, name, power, and faith of the Son of god.** It's something that you definitely participate in it. You're there, you're experiencing it through talking or groaning or sighing, but the real heart of the issue – in my limited experience and yet an experience of what I feel has been something of prayer – I feel like I can say that Christ is the

author of true prayer that works in the soul, and He's the provision, the thing that prayer comes from and He's the thing that prayer lays hold of.

I don't usually like to talk about my own experiences, partly because it makes me feel weird and partly because when people share experiences, someone else can look at you the wrong way... elevating you, or thinking of you as different or special. And I don't like that! So I usually try to avoid that at all costs. And yet I feel a desire to share a little bit about some things I'm experiencing about prayer. I feel torn between the two.

I guess one of the things that has been striking me recently about prayer is the reality that **God Himself creates in us the awareness of our needs.** Maybe I would have said that years ago, but I feel like I'm probably experiencing that in a very different way. I would have said He needs to create the awareness of our needs, but to actually begin to really feel and see them....! It's like you can see in the light what is needed, and you have this overwhelming awareness of your incredible emptiness and all the things Jesus describes in the Beatitudes start to be what you understand yourself to be.

You see that you're poor in spirit, that you have absolutely nothing. You see that you're hungry, and that you thirst for righteousness. You find yourself feeling meek and small and so desperate. You realize that your heart is in a place of absolute necessity. That is one of the things that has been striking me. **And the pressure of that truth working in your heart makes only one response possible. Only one response makes sense in the presence of that truth, and that is to cry out, to reach out and to draw in, drink in, and eat that which is provided for the soul in Christ.**

This is really what's been most different to me about prayer recently. One thing is the "otherness" of this perspective. Prayer is not just what I think or want naturally. It's not just what I think would be a good idea to pray for, or what the bible told me I should pray for, so I'm going to go down a list. It's not that. It's an awareness of need that comes from Christ. It's comes from light and it pushes in on your heart in a way that makes the only logical response yo cry out and reach.

The otherness of the perspective is one thing that has struck me, and the other thing is the *desire* that comes out of that perspective. It's a desire to sit there and draw from Christ...to reap, drink, to eat, to take, to possess what is being offered in Christ. And that just seems to be the only appropriate response in the awareness of that need. And it's very delightful.

I don't know how much to say about that again because it makes me feel kind of uncomfortable, but that has really become more real to me in the last six to eight months than it has ever before in

my life. And I find myself understanding a little bit why Paul says '*we do not cease* to pray for you, requesting that you be filled...' or why he says in other places, 'pray without ceasing...' As long as you're in the light; as long as you're in this unbelievable awareness of need for yourself and for the body, you can pray without ceasing. The awareness of need first works towards you and then it works towards the body. The first thing that strikes you is your incredible emptiness and needs, but then coming out from that comes an awareness of the entire body to which you've been joined. And you can actually "grab hold of" Christ for the whole body, in a sense. I think that may be what intercession is.

As long as the truth, the awareness, the consciousness of your incredible need is there in your heart, then prayer without ceasing is just a natural response. It doesn't make sense to stop praying if you're faced with this constant, perpetual vacuum of need that your soul is. So I think prayer ceases when this awareness ceases. Prayer ceases when the dark clouds of the natural mind and thought start to come in and fill up the air and limit your view and make it so that you can just see yourself—which is the natural condition of the natural man. Adam sees himself and that's all he sees. And he looks at all things as a means to gain things for himself.

So when Paul says, 'I have not ceased praying,' I don't think he's talking boasting in his discipline or talking about discipline at all. I think he's primarily talking about living in true spiritual awareness and prayer being the natural outworking of that truth. I like the phrase "the pressure of the truth," because that's kind of what it feels like. Truth squeezes prayer out of you, because that's the only think that makes sense.

The bible talks about different kind of prayer... I'm not sure 'different kinds' is the right way to say it. Maybe different 'ways' to experience prayer is better, or different 'experiences' of prayer. One of these seems to be a prayer for the benefit of the individual member of Christ, or the benefit of one's own soul. But let me take a quick rabbit trail and say this... If you're a member of the body of Christ in truth, your own spiritual growth is to the benefit for the rest of the body as well. In my natural body, what my hand does to protect itself from injury or frostbite, is to the benefit of the entire body. Or you could put it the other way around. The carelessness of the hand that causes it to become a dead or cut off member is going to have a dramatic effect on the entire body.

I say that because I feel like the Lord has dealt with me a number of times regarding the one body, spirit, life of the church and how the principle thing, the most fundamental and loving thing that I can do for the body of Christ, *is to walk in the light*. It might sound kind of selfish, but if I'm not awake in the light, if I'm not walking in faith and abiding in Christ (which are more or less synonymous), then I have absolutely nothing I can give to the Lord's body that's of any value. If I'm

not walking in His light, the only thing I'm going to give them—no matter how diligent I am or how much time I try to give myself to the body—the only thing I have to give is flesh. That's truly all I have to give. That might sound like a severe thing to say, but I think it's true.

There are certainly many natural or physical things that are appropriate to do for the church. There are natural needs to be met and natural things to do, but those things need to come out from a heart that's abiding in light. And if your heart isn't abiding in light, then you may be contributing to Potluck Sunday, but you're not really contributing to the life or growth of the body.

It seems to me that many of the admonitions to pray in the New Testament have to do with each individual staying awake, staying in the light. When I say staying in the light, I mean living in a present view, a present, real, living view of Christ that is constraining your soul and causing an alignment in your heart. I mean turning to Him in such a way that you can't allow the dark clouds of carnal, natural thought to creep back in. Because when that happens, all of your Christianity fall to the earth and become a purely natural thing.

I think that's why Jesus often snuck away to pray. I find it interesting, how in the Gospels Jesus would just slip away; or it says He would spend the night in prayer on the mountain. He very well could have been interceding for other things, but I'd guess that a lot of this had to do with Jesus walking around in this world of darkness and death and distraction, yet always staying one hundred percent awake to spiritual reality. He was always walking in that eternal view and speaking out from, ministering out from, and relating out from a state of being wide awake to what is spiritually real.

Paul often talks about this, too. He talks about watching and being alert in prayer. Why does he say that? **Paul, why do you say 'watch and stay alert?' Is something about to happen? Yes! You're about to fall asleep! That's what's about to happen. You're always about to fall asleep.** The word "watch" in Greek is just a word that means "remain awake." I know that a lot of Christians think that word "watch" means something about end-time events and watching for signs of the times. At least that's how I used to think about it. I don't think that's what Paul is talking about. That doesn't make sense to me for several reasons: One, because all the people that Jesus told to watch, and that Paul told to to watch, died without experiencing a physical, world-ending event. It seems strange that Paul would write "watch" to people that weren't going to be able to watch something!

Do we really think that when Paul tells us to watch he's talking about watching for something external? Isn't that somewhat contrary to what the whole New Testament is talking about. "Fix your eyes on things above, not on things on the earth..." Or, "Fixing your eyes on Jesus, the

Author and Finisher of faith". The more that I've seen the Lord, the more it's made sense to watch, to stay alert, to understand that the natural gravity of my soul pulls towards darkness and blindness. The natural gaze of my soul falls downward whenever I'm not fixing my heart on things above. The admonitions in the New Testament are towards the one thing that we CAN do, which is turn our hearts to Christ. We can watch. We can stay awake and pray.

I think a clear picture of "watching in prayer" and "keeping watch" is in the Garden of Gethsemane, right before Jesus is crucified. In the garden you see these men physically falling asleep, and Jesus continually says to them, "Can't you watch? Can't you stay awake?" and then He says, "Watch...so you don't fall into temptation!" And He goes away and they fall asleep again, yet the whole time Christ is staying awake and watching. I think that here we have another picture. It's true they were physically falling asleep and Jesus was physically staying awake, but I think there's something more for us to see there.

The biggest reality of prayer and experience of prayer that I have come to understand a little bit about is this turning, seeing, watching, and staying in the light, clinging to what faith is seeing... staying in the light so that I can obey the light, and so I can be "obedient unto faith." I turn and watch so that my heart aligns with what is being seen and known in the light. This is something that I've come to see as extremely beneficial both for my own soul and for the rest of the body of Christ. This seems to be a huge and important reality of prayer.

And yet the other experience of prayer that the bible speaks a lot about is petition or intercession. This seems to be what Paul is talking about in Colossians chapter one. I wish I had more to say about this. I honestly don't feel like I have a lot of understanding here, but I don't really think it's very different from what we've been talking about. First we are placed into Christ, and then in the awareness of Christ, in the awareness of our need as His body, we can receive and draw and access what God offers in Christ on behalf of other members of the same body.

I don't know that I have a whole lot more to say about that. Maybe I've touched this a little bit, but I don't want to speak outside of what I've seen.

Now, almost all of the prayers that you read in the New Testament are prayers for people within the body of Christ to grow up in Christ, to know Christ, to have the mind of Christ, the will of Christ, and the purpose of Christ established in them. That's definitely the lion's share of the prayers in the New Testament. **The apostles were praying within the boundaries of the body of Christ for that body to grow up in the life of the Head.** That's exactly what we see here in Colossians.

The majority of the prayers in the New Testament have to do with Paul or whomever, **praying that the Lord's body would be filled up with His mind, His light, His faith, that the body of Christ would grow up in Christ. And true growth happens through the mind and light of Christ, and the truth as it is in Christ, becoming more and more real in the body.** That's what growth is. Growth isn't getting more of something; it's the thing that you've received—Christ—becoming more and more real and clear and full in you. That's what these prayers are about.

Paul is interceding on behalf of the church, as member of His body, out from the place where he can see in the light and is aware of the needs of that body. It's like I said about personal prayer, where you sit in a keen, Spirit-given awareness of your need and draw and reap and feed on what God is offering the soul in Christ. I think intercession is pretty much the same thing, except it's for other members of the same body.

I've noticed many times that almost all the prayers in the New Testament – I can think of possibly one exception—are directed towards the body, and not towards the world that is not in Christ, but the world that is in Christ.

I'm not saying you shouldn't pray for your unbelieving neighbor. I'm just saying that as a matter of percentages, ninety-something percent of the prayers in the New Testament have to do with **Paul's "reaching for" and grabbing hold of the resources of the life and light of Christ for the sake of, for the benefit of, the saints.** Praying was laying hold of what God offers in Christ for the benefit of the body of Christ. And these prayer specifically, and almost entirely, had to do with the body of Christ starting to operate in the mind of Christ. This is what I always talk about: the necessity of Christ being revealed in you! That's what brings change. That's what brings any growth.

This is what the big problem is in the body of Christ. The big problem is that the body of Christ doesn't know the Head, so they operate in a huge collection of assumptions and misunderstandings and imaginations... which are really idols. It's a lot of golden calves that bear His name (in the sense that we put His name on those golden calves) just like Israel did when they said of their golden calf – "This is the God that led you out of Egypt." The main problem is that the body of the Lord Jesus Christ is not walking in the light of Christ, the mind and revealing of Christ. By nature we are contrary to Him in every conceivable way—in nature, perspective, and purpose—we're totally 'at enmity with Him,' Paul says. Therefore our Christianity is often the expression of a contrary man, nature, and purpose.

To an extent we realize this in the body of Christ, enough to talk about it, enough to point fingers at things, but we usually just point fingers at the symptoms. We don't point our finger at the

actual disease. We look at the body of Christ and say there is so much sin and division and bad theology and carnality. There are bad teachers, and pastors having affairs... etc... And we can easily run through a list of things that are obviously not good. But pointing fingers at symptoms is like having a this giant cancerous lump on your arm and putting a band aid on it. What's the problem with that? You're not treating the disease! You're just trying to cover a symptom and make it look a little less ugly or personally embarrassing.

What's the real ailment of the body of Christ? We don't see the truth! We don't know the truth! We know Who is the truth and we have a bible that testifies of Him on every page, but what a difference between knowing true words and knowing the One who is truth! Jesus says this in so many ways. "You diligently search the Scriptures thinking that in them you have eternal life, yet you are refusing the life that's standing in front of you!"

You don't know the truth, but you know the words about the truth. You think you know the truth because you have a whole bunch of concepts and ideas attached to those words—ideas mentally stapled to bible verses that you carry along with you. They are the little ideas that come to mind when you think of John 3:16, or any verse. You have these little ideas, concepts, applications, and interpretations. But none of these are a true knowledge of Christ.

We love to teach lessons. We say the church is divided, so let's just teach lessons on how to be one, and how to get along with each other. We say everyone in the church is addicted to pornography, so let's hold each other accountable. Make sure you won't do it and I won't do it, and we'll tell each other if we do do it! Now I'm not against that... There's a place for that kind of stuff, but that's still not dealing with the root, that's not dealing with the problem – that's steal dealing with the symptom. **We don't preach the light that maintains the human soul ABOVE that man and those problems and symptoms.**

There is a light that you can walk in that makes you walk above the sea. It's real! It makes you walk on top of the sea; it doesn't make you a better swimmer in it. This light doesn't throw Peter a set of swim fins! It actually makes him walk above it, so that the sea is below him. Sure, the sea is there if he wants to turn and look at it and sink into it, but you can actually live above it. If you walk in the light then your soul stays in a place where those things can't reach you.. Like the psalmist says, "He puts you on a high Rock where the arrows can't reach you."

But we don't know that light, so we don't preach that light.

We don't know that light so we don't preach that light and we say, "I'm not going to that church because I like a good preacher who gives me a practical application. I like a solid concept that I can write down on the back of my bulletin and go home and apply to my life." That's just another way of saying 'I prefer to keep living in the flesh, and trying to improve my natural life.' I know that sounds harsh, but its true. "Jesus, I know you offer a NEW life, but I'd prefer to keep mine and just apply all of your wise sayings to myself."

It's like if you're are walking along a beach and they've dragged some kid out of the water who has drowned... and you're looking down at the kid and there's still hope... You can do CPR and breathe the breath of life back into him, but instead of that you say, "You know what this kid needs? He needs some really high-tech robotic parts and a good make-up artist, and then we can make this guy look like he's still alive!"

That's a strange analogy I guess, but what I'm trying to say is that **the most practical thing for the body of Christ is to know HIS life.** We need to see and walk in and know and stay in and focus their heart on the life and light of Christ. And in that life there will certainly be all kinds of freedom and changes and different behaviors, but the actual *root* of these changes is a foreign life source. It's Christ himself. It's not concepts that you applied to a condemned man; it's a life that you abide in and walk in and live in.

The mind of Christ isn't another theology. It's not a doctrine. What is it? Paul says it's spiritual wisdom and understanding. It's the realization of His eternal will and purpose. That's what he's praying for here in Colossians. He's not praying for them to get their act together and break their bad habits. He's praying that they walk in a totally different mind, life, nature... And friends, that's the only manner that's worthy of the Lord.

Look at how Paul says this... He says, *'That you be filled with the realization of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding that you may walk worthily of the Lord, pleasing and bearing fruit in every good work.'* You're not going to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord by taking scriptures and applying them to your carnal life. That just doesn't do anything.

The only way to walk in a manner worthy, the manner that's pleasing the Lord, is to walk in the Man who IS worthy! To abide in the One who DOES please the Lord! It's not something you figure out how to do. Man always wants to jot down three points and five steps and seven keys to being like Jesus that you heard on a Christian radio station. But being like Jesus isn't a method. It's not a device. It's not practical application; it's a whole different Life! That's what I'm trying to say.

That's why Paul says "bearing fruit." What is fruit? Fruit isn't your attempts to copy Jesus. Fruit is the Seed that's been planted—the implanted Word—growing up in you in such a way that you bear His increase. The land of your soul becomes the increase. Your soul is that fertile land where the Seed has increase.

Paul puts that in here, too. "That you walk worthily of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in the realization of God." The "good works" are tied to the fruit. When the Scripture talks about good works, there are no good works apart from the only One who is good. There are a lot of nice activities and social causes that are beneficial for the natural man, but if you want to talk about good works, you have to talk about it in the context of spiritual fruit... and fruit that is the increase of the Seed.

I have some other verses here but we're almost out of time.

Romans 7:4 *"You were made to die to the law and be joined to another that you may bear fruit for God..."*

John 15 *"Apart from Him you can't even bear fruit. There's nothing you can do. You're a dead branch."* (my paraphrase)

That's all for this week.